

CLAIMS

Claims 1-4. (Cancelled).

5. (Currently Amended) A method of cleaning an optical fiber comprising:

disposing a cleaning member on an optical fiber moving path, wherein the cleaning member is a mesh member of a ~~soft~~ stretchable and flexible fiber sheet formed by knitting fiber threads and the fiber sheet satisfies the relation $F \geq 0.01$ (mm) and $G \leq 0.8 \times D$ in which D denotes the outer diameter of the optical fiber, G denotes the mesh size of the fiber thread and F denotes the diameter of the fiber thread,

bringing a surface of the moving optical fiber into a physical contact with the cleaning member for cleaning the surface of the moving optical fiber, and

inserting the optical fiber into an interstice of the fiber sheet.

6. (Previously Presented) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim 5, wherein a plurality of fiber sheets are laminated in a moving direction of the optical fiber.

7. (previously Presented) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim 6, wherein the number of the laminated fiber sheets is preset to establish the relation " $L \leq 54 \times T - 3.4$ " in which L (km) denotes the length of the optical fiber to be cleaned and T (mm) denotes the thickness of the laminated fiber sheets.

8. (Previously Presented) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim 5, wherein the cleaning member is electrically grounded.

9. (Previously Presented) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim 5, wherein the optical fiber is passed through the cleaning member prior to detection of uneven spots on the optical fiber.

10. (Previously Presented) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim 5, wherein the optical fiber is passed through the cleaning member prior to coloring of the optical fiber.

11. (Original) A method of producing an optical fiber as defined in claim 10, wherein after the optical fiber is passed through the cleaning member, the optical fiber is taken up on a reel and then is subjected to coloring.

Claims 12-16. (Cancelled).

17. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for cleaning an optical fiber comprising:
a cleaning member disposed on an optical fiber longitudinal moving path for physical contact with a surface of a moving optical fiber for cleaning the surface thereof, and
means for holding the cleaning member so that a contact portion of the cleaning member is movable in a direction perpendicular to the longitudinal moving path by the movement of the optical fiber.

18. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for cleaning an optical fiber as defined in claim 17, wherein the cleaning member is elongated due to friction between the cleaning member and

the optical fiber so that the contact portion of the cleaning member and the optical fiber is movable in a moving direction of the optical fiber.

19. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for cleaning an optical fiber as defined in claim 17, wherein the cleaning member is held to ~~to~~ provide sufficient slack in the cleaning member that the contact portion which is in a contact with the optical fiber is movable in the longitudinal direction and radial direction of the optical fiber due to the movement of the optical fiber.